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Should We Harness Our Wilderness Waters?

A radio discussion over WGN and the Mutual Broadcasting System

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Should We Harness Our Wilderness Waters?

MR. McBURNEY: Gentlemen, I think we had better get some background on this question of ours, "Should we harness our wilderness waters?" Will, what do you mean by "wilderness waters"?

MR. WILL: By "wilderness waters" I mean those water resources in wilderness areas that are included, for instance, in national parks and monuments, in our national forests, and perhaps to some extent in state parks. In the national parks and monuments alone, the country has set aside wilderness areas as large as the state of Maine. The national forests that have been set aside as wilderness areas possibly amount to something like 20,000,000 acres. Proposals for the use of a very small part of a particular national monument containing a wilderness area of exceptional beauty in Utah and Colorado are now pending in the Department of the Interior. I refer to the proposals of the Secretary of the Interior and of the Upper Colorado River Commission for the use of a small part of the Dinosaur Monument in Utah and Colorado. There, that use would be made by erecting a dam known as Echo Park Dam, which would impound sizeable confines of water in the Dinosaur Monument.

Correlating Use and Purpose

MR. McBURNEY: Does that identify the problem to your satisfaction, Mr. Voigt?

MR. VOIGT: Just to a certain extent; that is part of it, yes. I think that our subject here should perhaps be more specifically defined as a question of the proper use of public waters in areas dedicated to special recreational and conservation purposes, such as the national parks and monuments and the wildernesses in the national forests. Our position, of course, is that these should not be used for any purpose alien to the primary purposes of the area.

MR. McBURNEY: Are we talking

about water of any consequence in these areas?

MR. VOIGT: Indeed, we are!

MR. WILL: Water of enormous consequence to the five states of the Upper Colorado River Basin.

MR. VOIGT: That is one of the major rivers that head up or flow through these dedicated areas.

MR. McBURNEY: How would you state this problem, Sauers?

MR. SAUERS: The Congress has seen fit to set aside national parks and monuments and wilderness areas for their great values, for the fact that they are of national significance, important to every citizen in the United States. Every citizen has an equity in these areas. Our purpose in discussing this here is to ask why any impoundment should encroach upon national parks, national monuments or wilderness, where there is ample opportunity to accomplish the impoundments for irrigation and power outside of these areas.

Of National Concern

MR. McBURNEY: Does that state the question fairly, Quinn?

MR. QUINN: I would say that the question must necessarily be one of nationwide interest. We ask how these areas of the wilderness should be used and controlled. We, in the Missouri Valley Basin, for instance, have experienced loss of life, billions of dollars worth of property destroyed, and we are deeply concerned when people do not employ the full knowledge of mankind to use our natural resources. After all, the Congress of the United States has also established the policy that it is the job of our nation to develop natural resources and to protect the people against ravaging floods.

MR. SAUERS: I wish to point out that those of us who believe in the preservation of national parks and monuments and wilderness areas are not against the development of our

natural resources or of our water resources. We are against it where it involves the values for which these areas were set aside. We are hopeful and believe that the people, for instance in Mr. Will's Colorado Valley, can have all the water and all the power that they desire under conditions which will preserve the areas involved.

Who Has Ultimate Authority?

MR. WILL: I object very strenuously, McBurney, to the notion that all of these wilderness areas were set aside by the Congress of the United States. Such is absolutely not the case. For instance, in the matter of the Dinosaur National Monument, the Dinosaur National Monument was originally established by Presidential decree under the Antiquities Act which I cannot cite to you at the moment. It was enlarged subsequently again by Presidential decree. The Congress had nothing to do with the establishment and the subsequent enlargement of the Dinosaur National Park.

MR. SAUERS: But the Congress did convey the power to the President to establish it.

MR. VOIGT: Will said something about the Department of Interior having power over the matter of going into this Dinosaur National Monument. Only on March 7, 1951 the Secretary of the Interior signed his famous order 2618 in which he declared the issuance of the Department policy, "No bureau, service, or agency shall henceforth continue in any national parks or monuments any investigations or studies having to do with the building of dams and so forth, without the expressed written approval of the Secretary."

MR. WILL: I agree such an order exists, McBurney, of course, and it was proper it should be issued. I do not wish to be understood as favoring a general policy of invasion of national parks or monument areas or other wilderness areas. I suggest only that there are cases where the use of the water resources of those areas may be justified in the light of human needs. Now, it is true that I mentioned something of the Secretary

of the Interior's function in connection with these national parks and monument areas; it is also true and I believe I may as well mention it now, that about a year ago, possibly a bit longer, the Secretary of the Interior decided after elaborate hearings on the subject of the Dinosaur National Monument that use of the area for water resource development, for our Upper Colorado River basin, should be permitted.

MR. VOIGT: Did he go in voluntarily, or was he pushed?

Present and Potential Benefits

MR. QUINN. May I break in? For the benefit of our Reviewing Stand audience, wouldn't it clarify the question a little bit to say there are those who are vigorously opposed to impoundment of waters in certain areas in our country, and those, on the other hand, who think it is necessary and essential?

MR. McBURNEY: And both are represented here.

MR. QUINN: That is the issue that I think should be clarified for the benefit of our audience.

MR. McBURNEY: To sharpen that issue, I would like to ask Mr. Voigt, what are the values of these waters in their present state, in their natural state? Why are you anxious to preserve these parks?

MR. VOIGT: As an essential part of the natural scene, Dr. McBurney. These areas were set aside for specific purposes to be maintained as Cap Sauers can verify, inviolate for the preservation and enjoyment of people for all time by the Conservation Act of 1916. We think that the essence of that Act must be carried out, the policy and the principle must be carried forward by all of the agencies of the federal government.

MR. WILL: Again, let me suggest, that we don't want to give the impression that an area such as the Dinosaur National Monument was set aside by Act of the Congress.

MR. VOIGT: By Presidential proclamation under authority of an Act of Congress.

MR. WILL: I grant that.

MR. QUINN: Again, I would like to

point out that the benefits, the total benefits of any of these natural resource developments must be considered in discussing this question. These include the electrical energy that would go to the farm and ranch homes of that area, the flood control measures, the possibilities of the impoundment of water to keep the water off the Missouri Valley basin, drain off the high mountains where snow and ice melts in early spring. We must not forget these benefits. They are human benefits, as well as the economic benefits. I think that other areas of the country have given their valuable land to provide a protection and an investment for the people, and I see no reason to exclude certain areas from making their share of the contributions to the benefit of all the people.

Is It Necessary?

MR. SAUERS: Mr. Will insists in talking about the Dinosaur and Mr. Quinn has just spoken about benefits to ranchers. . . .

MR. VOIGT: In Missouri!

MR. SAUERS: I will talk about the ranches in the Colorado Valley. It has been conclusively proved to us preservationists by General Grant and others that the desire of the people like Mr. Will and his organization to have certain water impoundments in the Colorado River Valley can be secured with dams in places other than the national monuments.

MR. VOIGT: We concur in that.

MR. SAUERS: It isn't necessary to get into the national parks. We are happy to see them go some place else and build the dams and secure all the waters they need. We ask they stay out of national parks and national monuments.

MR. McBURNEY: You ask them to stay out and for what reason? I am putting the same question to you that I put to Mr. Voigt.

MR. VOIGT: Which I answered a bit ago.

MR. McBURNEY: Why preserve these parks?

MR. SAUERS: Because the values in a great natural landscape, which no

place else is duplicated in the United States, are of constant importance to the people of the United States. They are important, not only today, but they will continue to be important if they are protected under the present policies of the national government and the national parks areas. They will be there 2000 years from now when the dams they propose will long since become archeological artifacts.

MR. McBURNEY: Are you interested in fish, game, wild life? Is that a part of the problem?

MR. VOIGT: A minor part.

MR. SAUERS: The principal part is the magnificence of the scenery. They are the supreme example in the United States of the type of thing that they are.

Wild Life 'A Minor Part'

MR. WILL: I am glad to hear my friend Voigt suggest that the fishery resources and the game in those canyons we are talking about in the Dinosaur National Monument are a minor part of this picture.

MR. VOIGT: There is some wild life in the reservoir.

MR. WILL: The only thing you can catch down there and have been able to catch in that section for years is this trash fish that I think Bill Voigt was talking about at lunch.

MR. VOIGT: That is all you would catch in the reservoirs; that is a minor part of the problem.

MR. WILL: Once the impoundment has taken place, there will be an improvement in the fishery conditions.

MR. VOIGT: That is a question.

MR. WILL: It is a guess based on informed research by, for instance, the Game and Fish Commission of the State of Colorado and others.

MR. VOIGT: If you want to talk about tonnage of trash fish caught, yes.

MR. QUINN: I would like to say this to clarify the issue: If you put the water any place except in the national parks, and I think it is granted that from the agricultural standpoint that this park area is arid, unproductive land, then you gentlemen must take the position that you would put the

water some place else, even on the rich farm land. . . .

MR. VOIGT: No!

MR. QUINN: If you impound water, you have to flood some area.

MR. VOIGT: There are immediate areas of less value economically, recreationally, scenically, and so forth. You, Quinn, are turning into the moderator of this affair!

MR. McBURNEY: I need Mr. Quinn's help, if I may say so. I want to ask the other side of this question. I have been pressing for the reasons for wanting to preserve this area, these park areas. What are the economic possibilities of these wilderness waters?

Some Economic Considerations

MR. WILL: So far as those economic considerations are concerned, we have to bear in mind that the primary purpose we have in the Upper Colorado River Basin is to provide a series of storage reservoirs that will permit our five states to make the full use of water that is apportioned to them under the 1922 Colorado River compact. They cannot do that without a system of reservoirs that will hold water in good years for those years in which flows are greatly reduced.

MR. McBURNEY: Why build the dam in a national park?

MR. VOIGT: That is my question!

MR. WILL: We have to build it in the Dinosaur Monument area because some fifty years of investigations have revealed that no other combination of sites would provide equivalent storage as economically from the point of view of storage; that is to say, no other site reduces evaporation losses to the extent that the narrow canyons of the Echo Park Dam Site would reduce it.

MR. VOIGT: That is an opinion, and there are other people whom I consider just as fully qualified, such as General Grant whom Cap Sauers mentioned a minute ago, who have stated opinions of a different nature. They have analyzed these presumed facts and figures that have been produced over the last fifty years and have come up with entirely different

suggestions, beliefs and convictions.

MR. WILL: General Grant has proved to the informed hydrologists that he does not know whereof he speaks, that it is a subject foreign to his experience and to his learning.

MR. VOIGT: I resent that impugning General Grant's qualifications.

MR. WILL: General Grant himself has admitted in public hearings before the Secretary of the Interior . . .

MR. VOIGT: That he was not a hydrologist.

MR. WILL: He has admitted he was not qualified to fairly form an opinion; but he has been airing opinions ever since.

MR. VOIGTS: He is a qualified analyst.

MR. SAUERS: Has he been refuted by the Bureau of Reclamation?

MR. WILL: He has been refuted time after time.

MR. SAUERS: You have a dozen dam sites on the Colorado River within gunshot almost of the Echo Park thing. You can create the same economic conditions and recreational values without destroying the park.

MR. WILL: Mr. Sauers, there is no combination of substitutes . . .

MR. VOIGT: Quinn wants to act as moderator again!

Conflicting Facts

MR. QUINN: I want to make a point. I have been quiet here for the last five minutes. I am not trying to be moderator, but every time the competent men employed by our federal government come out with a set of engineering facts, the forces of opposition are always able to produce another engineer who says that those engineering facts are totally wrong. In other words, that is a technique well established in the Missouri Valley Basin. Yet we all know the geographical location of dams and reservoirs are established because of certain engineering facts as well as cost ascertainties that must be looked at in the over-all, total picture. Moreover, it is the policy of our federal government, as I understand it, to store water in arid and unproductive re-

gions, and not on the rich soil on the producing farms.

MR. VOIGT: That is outside of our scope here today.

MR. SAUERS: I would like to point this out: Often the engineering facts, not so much the facts, but the engineering programs are dictated by the political opportunism practiced by the engineers so involved.

MR. WILL: I am going to resent that, McBurney. We can't be accused in the Upper Colorado Commission of political opportunism. We are wholly a non-partisan organization!

MR. VOIGT: So is the Izaak Walton League!

MR. WILL: I agree that the Izaak Walton League . . .

MR. VOIGT: . . . is devoted to the public interest.

The Consequences

MR. WILL: Let me suggest this: The best combination of alternatives would involve a loss of water sufficient to supply the annual requirements of a city of two and a half million people, or the irrigation requirements of an area of 175,000 acres, in other words, more than enough for one thousand family-sized farms, and the power requirements of 80,000 families.

MR. McBURNEY: If you were to construct the dam some place other than this national monument . . .

MR. WILL: Those are the losses in prospect if we build elsewhere.

MR. McBURNEY: Let me ask, before you challenge this point, Voigt, what if the dam were constructed in the national park, Sauers?

MR. SAUERS: It would certainly destroy the natural values for which the Dinosaur National Monument was founded. The Monument was founded because of the natural values which exist there. If you fill the canyons, which are magnificent, half full of water, you don't have a national monument any more, you have an impoundment of water and a power dam, and you don't have at all the values you started out with. Moreover, our

fight on this thing is concerned with the policy which has been established and which must not be disturbed. This is a precedent which would admit the same sort of argument in the case of Grand Canyon, the Glacier View, Mammoth Cave, and innumerable other situations which are now being worked upon by the Corps of Engineers or the Bureau of Reclamation.

MR. McBURNEY: In other words, you suggest that there are many proposals of this sort to move into these national parks with water projects?

MR. VOIGT: Let me give you another slant on this. We had 30,000,000 visitors in our national park system in the last year, and the number increases at least 10% per year. We expect somewhere in the neighborhood of 36,000,000 people to visit parks. We have a million a year at Rocky Mountain and the same at Yellowstone and other northerly parks where the season is short. The present park system is overcrowded. It is a blessing we still have a few undeveloped areas, like Dinosaur, an improved park type facility to help take care of the growing millions of visitors. Those people are going to spend more in Utah and Grand Junction Colorado than the construction crews that build the dam.

MR. QUINN: Think of the additional customers you will bring into the park with skiing, the unexcelled ice skating and winter sports produced by the impoundment of water there; and the fish and wild life in the summertime would be terrific.

Precedents and Policies

MR. VOIGT: All you are going to have is another big, overgrown bath tub out there. If they want reservoirs, these people can go to the heavily populated areas, the TVA country, and so on.

MR. QUINN: As the Director of the Izaak Walton League, have you ever supported the establishment of one reservoir any place?

MR. VOIGT: We have not objected to Fort Beck, Garrison, or the dams in the TVA.

MR. QUINN: You have not supported them.

MR. VOIGT: I wouldn't go as far as to say that—we haven't had to.

MR. QUINN: Officially, you do not support the construction of dams and reservoirs.

MR. VOIGT: We don't take the building of a dam, just as a dam, as the criterion. We look at each one separately, individually, and say, "Is this project good or is this project bad?" and we try to fit it into the whole scheme of things.

MR. QUINN: The record is a record.

MR. WILL: I am most interested in the suggestion that has been made by my friend, Quinn, that the Izaak Walton League has never supported a proposal for the construction of some water reservoir development projects. I think that is probably strictly accurate. I think it is time that some of these organizations like the Izaak Walton League, the America Civic Planning Association, the National Parks Association should sometime come before the Congress and support a proposal that means benefit to mankind now living.

What Is 'Beneficial'?

MR. VOIGT: I resent the attack on the integrity of the Izaak Walton League.

MR. WILL: I didn't attack it.

MR. VOIGT: You did indeed. You said we are not supporting anything that is beneficial. We support those things which we consider beneficial, the things which our membership, nation-wide, considers beneficial, and I say the things we are supporting are the true beneficial things.

MR. WILL: You are opposing all dams. . . .

MR. VOIGT: At Dinosaur.

MR. WILL: The only way you can keep your contributions flowing in and keeping your membership aroused is by leading them to believe that something is threatened.

MR. VOIGT: Let's talk about the sources of our contributions then.

MR. WILL: Yes, let's.

MR. QUINN: I was trying to establish a fact. I am not questioning the policy. Every organization or association has the right under our form of government to draw up a policy,

whether it is for or against, but I think the audience certainly should be informed, and it should be an interesting discovery, that there are groups who very definitely oppose the construction of reservoirs or dams, and the tremendous benefits that are forthcoming to the people. They do this because they have objectives and ambitions that are contrary.

MR. SAUERS: As I said before, the group I represent does not oppose the construction of dams, nor do they oppose the development of water resources.

MR. VOIGT: We don't either.

MR. SAUERS: We are for the preservation of those things set aside for the benefit of the people of all of the United States! And it has been shown by the annual attendance in national parks that millions are interested. We bespeak the desirability of preserving our national parks and the great cultural values which they represent.

What Would Be Changed?

MR. WILL: I think these cultural attributes of the national parks and monuments areas cannot be overestimated. I believe in that very profoundly. On the other hand, when Brother Sauers just a moment ago suggested that the use of a small portion of the Dinosaur National Monument for water storage purposes would destroy the monument as such, he meant to say the inspirational values of the monument would be destroyed. I am bound to say he has fallen into profound error on that!

MR. McBURNEY: We have a difference of opinion on that. Mr. Will seems to think the park would be preserved essentially in its present form, and someone else described it as an enormous bath tub. What are the facts?

MR. SAUERS: The facts are the Dinosaur National Monument was set aside because of the values it now has, that is, as a wilderness area.

MR. WILL: I'll admit that.

MR. SAUERS: I will admit it for the same reason the Yellowstone, the Great Smokies, and all such property was set aside. They have been set aside as a great national area and

there are values which are transcendent, and above anything else in the country. Therefore, when you move in there and you destroy certain of those natural values, you decrease the value in Dinosaur. You don't need to put the dams there; you've got plenty of other places to put your dams.

MR. McBURNEY: What are the sources of these threats to these wildernesses?

MR. SAUERS: Bureau of Reclamation, Corps of Engineers, and local bodies such as represented by Mr. Will.

MR. WILL: I think we ought scarcely to describe the Upper Colorado River Commission which represents the five states of the Upper Colorado River Basin as posing a threat to the national parks and monuments in the country.

'Obligation Fulfillment'

MR. VOIGT: You propose a dam in Dinosaur, you are threatening . . .

MR. WILL: We would use a small portion of it. We propose the impoundment of water because we believe it is vital to the fulfillment by the United States in the most economical way possible of its obligation under the Mexican Treaty, and because it is vital also to the fulfillment

of obligations under the 1922 Colorado River Compact.

MR. VOIGT: You haven't mentioned national defense or irrigation water yet.

Is Defense Relevant?

MR. WILL: I could mention those. I took for granted everybody here knew that the storage of that water and its release for the making, among other things, of hydroelectric power is of vast concern to the national defense picture in an area which contains the largest percentage of the uranium resources of the country.

MR. VOIGT: We've come to look hard and long at the talk that the parks and wildernesses must be entered to get at their resources for "national defense". We didn't have to do it in World War I or World War II. We've found that most if not all the hullabaloo about national defense needs in such connection are mere excuses for invasion of areas the would be exploiters couldn't get into otherwise. Two recent instances come to my mind. . . .

MR. McBURNEY: We will not have time for them. I am sorry but our time is up.



Suggested Reading



Compiled by William Huff,
and M. Helen Perkins, Reference Department,
Deering Library, Northwestern University.

BUTCHER, DEVEREUX. *Exploring Our National Parks and Monuments.* Oxford University Press, New York, 1947.

A booklet by the Executive Secretary of the National Parks Association, listing our national parks from coast to coast, presenting standard tourist information, and strongly protesting against any encroachments on the primeval beauty of these preserves.

CARHART, ARTHUR H. *Water — or Your Life.* Lippincott, Philadelphia, 1951.

A presentation of the water problem in America, pointing out why there are shortages, proposing solutions, and considering the value of our wilderness recreation areas relative to the use of their waters for power or irrigation.

DANIELS, WALTER M., Comp. *Should We Have More TVA's?* H. W. Wilson Co., New York, 1950. (Reference Shelf, Vol. 22, No. 2).

A compilation of abstracts from magazine articles, books, and pamphlets dealing with the control and intelligent utilization of our water resources; bibliography.

FRANK, BERNARD and NETBOY, ANTHONY. *Water, Land, and People.* Knopf, New York, 1951.

A discussion of water and the public welfare, presenting problems brought about by man's mishandling of his water resources.

OLSON, SIGURD. *We Need Wilderness.* National Parks Association, Washington, D. C., 1946.

Originally appearing in the "National Parks Magazine" (January-March, 1946), this reprint is a plea to preserve our wilderness park areas and not destroy their grandeur by constructing dams, air fields, and reservoirs.

THOMAS, HAROLD E. *Conservation of Ground Water; A Survey of the Present Ground Water Situation in the United States.* McGraw, New York, 1951.

Comprised of case histories of areas which use ground water for domestic consumption. This book stresses the seriousness of our present water shortage.

TILDEN, FREEMAN. *National Parks; What They Mean to You and Me.* Knopf, New York, 1951.

A consideration of the meaning and purpose of our national parks, including factual information on individual parks and monuments with a discussion of the philosophy on which the preservation of wilderness areas is based; illustrated.

U. S. President's Water Resources Policy Commission. *Report.* U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1950.

This extensive and detailed report is in three volumes, the first being

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a general report entitled, "A Water Policy for the American People;" Volume II, "Ten Rivers in America's Future;" Volume III, "Water Resources Low."

WILLIAMS, ALBERT N. *The Water and the Power; Development of the Five Great Rivers of the West*. Duell, Sloan and Pearce, Inc., New York, 1951.

A study of water resources development in the West relative to power, flood control, and irrigation.

American City 67:139, Jan., '52. "What Stream Pollution Means Nationally."

A brief article pointing out that we have made progress toward eliminating stream pollution but must advance further if all water resources are not to suffer pollution.

Christian Science Monitor Magazine Jan. 28, '50, p. 2. "How Much Water Have We?" H. B. NICHOLS.

Development of America's water supply has not kept up with its population increase, and the United States must find ways to conserve its water.

New Republic 124:14-15, Jan. 8, '51. "A Drop To Drink." A. G. MEZERICK.

A statement brought about by the report of the President's Water Policy Commission, pointing out the dangers of low national water supply and recommending that a solution may be in developments such as the TVA.

Scientific Monthly 71:241-7, Oct., '50. "Dam Site vs. Norm Site." B. MacKAYE.

An attempt to answer the question, "how to improve water policy in the field of wilderness?" and yet not disturb the productivity of the land in its primeval state.

Scientific Monthly 74:3-20, Jan., '52. "Symposium on the Role of Ecology in Water Pollution Control."

Five specialists consider various aspects of the control of water pollution and the role ecology can play in solving water pollution problems.

Today's Health 28:18-19, July, '50. "Water, Water, Everywhere?" F. OSBORN.

It is important to educate the public regarding the need for water conservation, since public support is required for legislative appropriations that will strengthen our water policy.

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